

Message Text

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17

ACTION EA-14

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R 210745Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2223

INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 6912

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, AS, US

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S DEPARTURE INTERVIEW AND PRESS
COMMENT ON US-AUSTRALIAN RELATIONS

1. SUMMARY: AUSTRALIAN MEDIA GIVE PROMINENT ATTENTION TO AMBASSADOR GREEN'S DEPARTURE INTERVIEW UNDERLINING US REACTION TO TRADE MINISTER CAIRNS' ALLEGATIONS AGAINST US POLICY IN VIETNAM. CAIRNS HAS REAFFIRMED HIS VIEWS. COLUMNIST IN DAILY FINANCIAL REPORT PROVIDES LENGTHY AND UNDOUBTEDLY INSPIRED ANALYSIS OF US-AUSTRALIAN FRICTIONS, STATING US HAS REACTED DEFENSIVELY TO NEW INDEPENDENT AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN POLICY. SEE COMMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. IN BRIEF AIRPORT INTERVIEW WITH ABC RADIO PRIOR TO DEPARTURE, AMBASSADOR GREEN RESPONDED TO QUESTIONS ABOUT CAIRNS' STATEMENTS IN HANOI BY SAYING: "WE OBVIOUSLY
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WERE NOT HAPPY ABOUT WHAT HE SAID. I AM NOT SURE WHAT

PROMPTED HIM TO SAY IT. WE OBVIOUSLY HAD TO REGISTER OUR DISSATISFACTION WITH THE STATEMENT, ELSE IT WOULD BE ASSUMED THAT WE DID NOT TAKE EXCEPTION."

2. AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT CONTRARY TO COMMENTS IN AUSTRALIAN PRESS THAT LOW-RANKING STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL HAD PROTESTED TO AMBASSADOR PLIMSOLL, IT WAS ACUTALLY "THE HIGHEST RANKING OFFICIAL THAT DEALS WITH THIS PART OF THE WORLD".

3. AMBASSADOR WENT ON TO SAY: "QUITE FRANKLY I THINK THAT THE AMERICAN RECORD IN VIETNAM IS WELL ENOUGH KNOWN HERE IN AUSTRALIA THAT I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT ANYBODY HERE, BEYOND A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE, WOULD TAKE SERIOUSLY THAT WE WERE GUILTY OF AGGRESSION. WE'RE ALL TRYING TO BRING ABOUT PEACE IN INDO-CHINA. WE'RE WORKING VERY HARD ON IT AND REMARKS LIKE THAT JUST DON'T HELP THIS." ASKED IF HE THOUGHT DR. CAIRNS WAS AN EMBARRASSMENT TO AUSTRALIAN-US RELATIONS, MR. GREEN SAID: "I DON'T WNAT TO COMMENT ABOUT YOUR MINISTERS. I HAVE MET DR. CAIRNS AND I KNOW HIM." "I'D JUST AS SOON LET THE ISSUE STAND WHERE IT IS NOW. WE OBVIOUSLY WERE NOT HAPPY ABOUT WHAT HE SAID, BUT THERE IT IS."

4. IN SEPARATE INTERVIEW WITH ABC RADIO, CAIRNS SAID THAT HIS CONTROVERSIAL STATEMENTS WERE ACCURATE AND OUGHT TO BE MADE. HE SAID HE DID NOT CONSIDER HIS REMARKS TO HAVE EMBARRASSED THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT AND ADDED: "IF THEY ARE AN EMBARRASSMENT TO THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT I THINK THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT MUST BE VERY EASY TO EMBARRASS."

5. AUSTRALIAN PRESS DECEMBER 21 GAVE PROMINENT AND ACCURATE COVERAGE TO AMBASSADOR'S REMARKS AND TO CAIRNS' COMMENT. TYPICAL HEADLINES WERE : CANBERRA TIMES: "DR. CAIRNS' STATEMENTS UNHELPFUL, US AMBASSADOR SAYS". SYDNEY MORNING HERALD: "CAIRNS' NO HELP IN PEACE BID -- ENVOY". THE AUSTRALIAN: "GREEN COMES INTO OPEN ON CAIRNS". THE AGE: "AMBASSADOR, CAIRNS' SNIPE OVER HANOI".

6. IN SEPARATE LONG ANALYSIS HEADED, "US-AUST. FRICTION--
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THE GREENING OF AUSTRALIA SLOWS DOWN", MAXIMILLIAN WALSH IN FINANCIAL REVIEW PORTRAYS CAIRNS' EPISODE AS CONVENIENT EXCUSE FOR STATE DEPARTMENT TO RELEASE PENT UP EXASPERATION AND FRUSTRATION OVER NEW AND MORE INDEPENDENT AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN POLICY. CITING INDOCHINA POLICY AS BONE OF CONTENTION, WALSH PROVIDES DETAILED ACCOUNT OF CAMBODIAN CREDENTIALS ISSUE IN UN, STATING THAT US PUT HEAVY PRESSURE UPON GOA AND PERSUADED JAPANESE AND INDONESIAN GOVERNMENTS

TO DO LIKEWISE. HE ADDS THAT GOA REJECTED US PRESSURE TO CONTRIBUTE TO CAMBODIAN ESF. WALSH ALSO DISCUSSES NEW AUSTRALIAN POLICIES REGARDING FOREIGN INVESTMENT WHICH HE PORTRAYS AS HIGHLY UNPALATABLE TO US. HE POINTS OUT THAT AUSTRALIAN OPPOSITION PARTIES HAVE CRITICIZED ONLY STYLE AND NOT SUBSTANCE OF WHITLAM'S FOREIGN POLICY, WHICH HE TERMS BIPARTISA. WALSH CONTENDS THAT REORIENTATION IN AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN POLICY WAS INEVITABLE AND "AXIMATICALLY, AN ESSENTION INGREDIENT OF THIS POLICY IS A DOWNGRADING OF AUSTRALIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH US."

7.COMMENT: ARTICLES HAVE BEEN AIRMAILED TO WASHINGTON. AMBASSADOR'S INTERVIEW LEFT NO DOUBT ABOUT US REACTION TO CAIRN'S ALLEGATIONS. IT IS NOW IN OUR INTEREST TO LET THIS MATTER DROP.

8. WALSH ARTICLE IS DISTRUBING SINCE IT IS HIGHLY FACTUAL AND DETAILED, REFLECTING EVIDENT BRIEFING BY DFA OR PRIMIN'S OFFICE. THE THEME THAT US IS OVER-REACTING TO INDEPENDENT NEW AND BIPARTISAN AUSTRALIAN NATIONALISM CAN PROVE DIFFICULT FOR US, PARTICULARLY SINCE OPPOSITION HAS IN FACT SEEMED RELUCTANT TO ATTACK WHITLAM ON SUBSTANCE OF FOREIGN POLICY.

9. DEFENSE DEPARTMENT FIRST ASSISTANT SECRETARY PRITCHETT, WHO HAS SPENT PAST TWO DAYS WITH BARNARD IN TASMANIA, URGES THAT US NOT BE OVERLY CONCERNED BY CAIRNS EPISODE. HE SAYS BARNARD WILL DELIVER RESPONSIBLE AND MODERATE ADDRESS IN NEW YORK JANUARY 5 IN OBVIOUS CONTRAST TO CAIRNS.
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